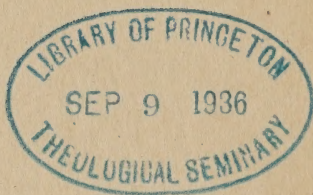


# RELIGIOUS PARTIES IN ISRAEL

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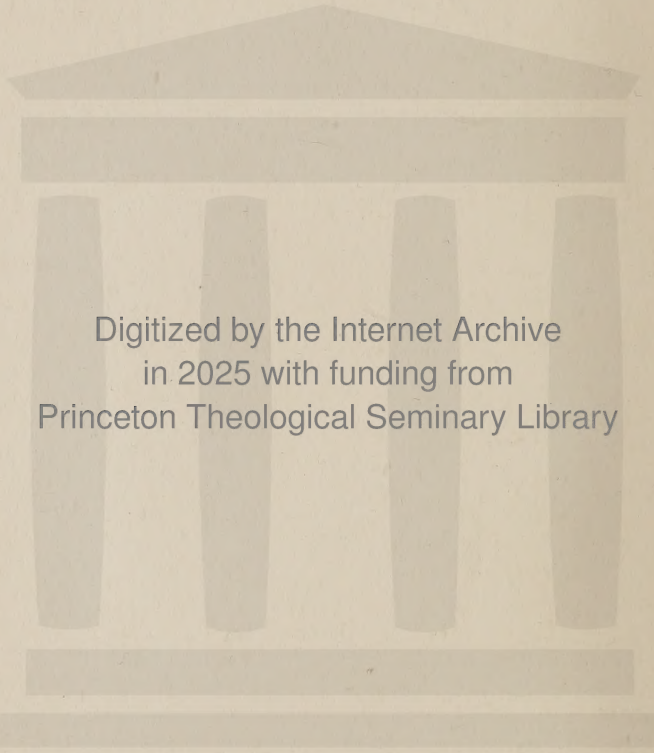


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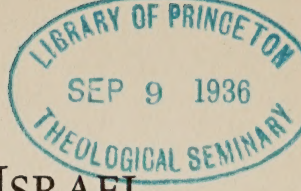


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# RELIGIOUS PARTIES IN ISRAEL







# RELIGIOUS PARTIES IN ISRAEL

*Their History, Methods, and Perils*

Eight Talks for the Cultural Programs of  
Jewish Women's Organizations

By  
ABRAHAM BURSTEIN



*Published by*  
THE WOMEN'S BRANCH OF THE  
UNION OF ORTHODOX JEWISH CONGREGATIONS OF AMERICA

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to the late

JANE FISCHER

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The WOMEN'S BRANCH of the UNION OF ORTHODOX CONGREGATIONS OF AMERICA is publishing this book in the hope that it will serve as a simple and effective means of familiarizing the modern Jewess with the background of Jewish history and perhaps stimulate her to further study.

## TO PARENT GROUPS AND SISTERHOODS

Synagogue organizations meet for many purposes. At these meetings, the giving of charity, religious services, the Hebrew School, and similar practical activities are discussed and planned. But too rarely is the time of a meeting occupied with the main purpose of Jewish assemblies—the acquisition of Jewish knowledge. Knowledge gives power at all times; now more than ever does the Jewish parent require information wherewith to combat the forces that are despoiling us of our youth.

It is particularly important that we know just what the effects of sects in Judaism has been in the past. If it can be proved that they have been definitely harmful, such information will help convince our young people that their own deviations are without merit. Hence this series of short essays and lectures, with added suggestions for discussion and study. In eight monthly meetings the entire series can be covered. Announcement of the subject assigned for the next meeting will permit interested members to look up further sources of material. The topics are so bound up with facts and incidents of the present that practically everyone will be able to offer his personal experiences and attitudes in discussion.

It has been thought best to limit the treatment of the good and the bad in Jewish sectarianism to the fundamental themes listed. A brief Biblical history serves as preface.





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## BOOKS TO BE CONSULTED

Bible and Apocrypha

Graetz: History of the Jews

Margolis and Marx: A History of the Jewish People

Kastein: History and Destiny of the Jews

Jewish Encyclopedia

De Haas: Encyclopedia of Jewish Knowledge

Radin: The Jews Among the Greeks and Romans

Gaster: The Samaritans (also describes Pharisees and Sadducees)

Goldstein: Bible Comments for Home Reading

Bentwich: Hellenism

Herford: The Pharisees

Moore: Judaism

Minkin: The Romance of Hassidism

Kasovich: The Eternal People

Millgram: An Anthology of Medieval Hebrew Literature

Hess: Rome and Jerusalem

Raisin: Haskalah Movement

Friedlaender: Past and Present

Schechter: Seminary Addresses

Studies in Judaism, I

Joseph: Judaism as Creed and Life

Hertz: Affirmations of Judaism

Jung: The Jewish Library

Schwartz: The Jewish Caravan



## A BRIEF BIBLICAL HISTORY

Israel is the only historical group, still potent in modern times, that is able to trace its beginnings to far antiquity. Abraham, the first patriarch, came of highly civilized Semitic stock in Chaldea four thousand years ago. Both he and his immediate descendants, Isaac and Jacob, were shepherd chieftains, wandering through Canaan (early Palestine) and ultimately settling in Egypt. This small company, headed by the sons of Jacob, grew to a vast number; and their neighbors, fearful lest the aliens become too strong for the earlier natives, reduced them to slavery. Moses, later to become the leader of his people, though brought up as an Egyptian, turned actively to the aid of his brethren. He escaped to Midian, in the Sinaitic peninsula, after killing one of the Egyptian taskmasters.

Moses and his brother Aaron, divinely inspired, were able to weld this mass of slaves into a national group. They were destined not alone to take over the land of Canaan physically, but to bring to that territory the ideals of monotheism, righteousness, justice, mercy, and divine authority, which Israel—once possessed of the Torah—was first to make a national and racial policy. However, it was Joshua, successor to Moses, who actually subjugated most of the Promised Land, about 1160 B.C.E. In the effort to retain the land and maintain the teachings of Moses, the people were engaged in years of combat with the earlier sojourners of Palestine.

Defeats and frequent tribal quarrels brought on the dictatorial Judges who succeeded Joshua. Though most of these were mighty warriors, like Samson and Gideon, there was one great woman, Deborah, among them, and the famed sage and king-maker, Samuel. When the people demanded a ruler to

unite them and fight their battles, Samuel, albeit with misgivings, anointed the imposing figure of Saul as the first king of Israel.

Saul was a powerful fighter, but he could not subdue his own petty jealousies and impulses. When he died in battle, the young warrior David, whose prowess the king had openly resented and envied, became the ruler. David extended the boundaries of Israel to their fullest expanse, captured Jerusalem as a permanent capital, and established a dynasty still beloved by his descendants. His faults have been forgiven, in the light of achievements which also included the writing of many of the Psalms. Solomon, his son, chosen king thereafter, made international alliances, engaged in maritime commerce, espoused foreign princesses, built the first Temple, and created such dissention in the kingdom by his excessive taxation and forced labor as to bring on the immediate disruption that followed his reign.

For the North broke away from the South, which was benefiting most by Solomon's projects, and thereafter there were two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. In the north, Israel suffered for two centuries under the murderous ambitions of a succession of rulers, and finally fell under the attack of mighty Assyria. The siege of 722 completely destroyed the northern tribes; they were carried into exile, and without doubt were assimilated among the surrounding peoples.

To the south in Judah, fortunately, the people still felt a loyalty to the house of David. But the country became the prey of its neighbors, who coveted the treasure in its Temple, and who made the land a battleground for the perennial struggle between Egypt and Babylonia. In 608, King Josiah was defeated in an effort to hold back the invading Egyptians. Then began years of murders, captivities, and rebellions, culminating in the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple,

on the ninth of Ab, 586. Judah was carried off into captivity; Palestine became a waste land.

It must not be assumed that during all this period no voice was raised to decry the sins of the people and their rulers, or to give encouragement to the righteous. After Samuel and Elijah, we have the writings of a number of prophets who thundered against iniquity, defined Israel's ideals, and stood with the populace in their days of agony. From such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Micah came the newer strength that rendered Israel an immortal race and faith.

Despite their long exile and the destruction of their land and Temple, the people still retained a love for the home of their first greatness. In Babylon they established places of worship and study, wherein they continued to develop their pure and righteous monotheism. But it was Cyrus, king of the Persian conquerors of Babylon, who permitted the return of the Israelites to their homeland. Since most of the Jews had been completely domiciled in the alien country, only a small number actually migrated to Palestine. This group, despite many difficulties and the active opposition of the Samaritans (descended from the dregs of the few remaining Israelites and observing a hybrid form of Judaism), was enabled to complete the new Temple in 516. The seventy year exile is thus reckoned from 586 to 516 B.C.E.

The great spiritual leader of this epoch was Ezra the Scribe, who combined a profound teaching of the essence of Judaism with such practical edicts as the suppressing of mixed marriages. In all his labors he was ably supported by the Jewish governor, Nehemiah, former cupbearer to Artaxerxes, king of Persia. The activities of these two men showed their influence on Jewish life and development for centuries. The canon—the established form—of the Bible came into being soon after their time. The Great Synod was formed—a body of men to



pass judgment on Jewish spiritual problems. In truth, the entire course of Jewish teaching, until the very present, was given its direction in the peaceful early days of the Second Temple. The coming struggles against Greece and Rome were to be won, and Christian aggression offset, by the spiritual strength engendered during the latter Biblical period.

## I. DIFFERENCES IN BIBLICAL TIMES

Any study of Jewish history, even of the earliest Biblical period, indicates that the modern conflicts among Jews are but a continuation of centuries of dissension. Israel, always hated, always finding life difficult, never lacked for weaker brethren, anxious to escape the reproach of the nations. These men have been forever imitating the customs of the environment—giving up their own religious observances for those of the more powerful and socially desirable ruling classes.

We may again repeat this truth, in an effort to seek present comfort for our people. We must remember that Abraham was promised a progeny more numerous than the stars and as incalculable as the sands of the sea. The prophecy was a truthful one, even though all the professing Jews of the world might today be contained within our tiny original corner of the earth. For if we enumerate the descendants of all the rebellious and disloyal and forcibly converted Jews of two or three thousand years, we can be assured that the world is overrun by sons of Judah. Hence, one can discover many anti-Semites with not a little Jewish blood in their veins.

Today there is again a minority who cling to all of Israel's ideals. The elect of our race have always been a minority. Not to the multitude is given the strength to resist aggression and temptation. It is easier, and as a rule more comfortable, to assimilate than to fight assimilation.

We are told that even the patriarch Jacob was fearful lest his children taste of the fleshpots of Egypt and forsake the faith of Abraham and Isaac. It is said that, despite his love for the long-lost son, he was reluctant to go with them to see Joseph; and that for this reason they were compelled to carry him bodily. For once these men had tasted the luxuries of the

great country on the Nile, they might hesitate to resume the life of their own comparatively barren and rugged homeland. This fear beset Jacob through the remainder of his days; and only when in unison they proclaimed their eternal allegiance to the God and teachings of their forbears did he find his final peace. His sons kept the promise they had made on the father's deathbed:—and because they lived as their father taught, to this day we repeat the Talmudic statement, "Jacob our father did not die!"

The story of the Exodus is one of frequent discontent, and ingratitude to the first leader of the people. They thought not of the freedom ahead, but of the present discomfort; the flesh-pots of Egypt remained alluring, despite the welts raised on their own flesh by the taskmasters. The manna was not sufficient; spiritual sustenance was waved aside. For a while they hearkened to the voice of Moses; yet the moment he departed to accept the Torah, the greatest ethical document in history, the constitution of the new nation, they reverted to the familiar Egyptian calf-worship. Leaders such as Korach arose, to challenge Moses and the entire new deal he had brought into their lives. We read of these rebels being destroyed; and we can assume that there were other desertions, quiet and unheralded. But the faithful ones remained, and ultimately possessed the Promised Land.

Even in their own land, the people did not for long remain unified. There were pagans here too, as in Egypt, who seemed to find satisfaction in various forms of idol worship. These Israelites, whose new religion was still strange to them, were speedily misled by their native companions in the fields and vineyards. For Jews even then readily emulated the customs of alien fields. Then, too, parents saw their children adopt revelry and indulgence as their sole faith; many of the younger generation of that day were also lost to us.

But Judaism persisted nevertheless. Though a Samson might desert to a Delilah, he would some day rise in his might and destroy the Philistines. There was always a voice crying out in the court or the wilderness. Even when the people sought to become like the other nations, with the pomp and license and oppressiveness of a kingdom, there remained a Samuel to watch over the destinies of the new rulers, to anoint a David in place of a Saul.

An entire line of prophets followed the wise and vigilant Samuel. Kings made divisions in the land; many were grasping, murderous, unscrupulous. At times it appeared that every teaching of Moses would be obliterated from the minds and hearts of men. Intermarriage, injustice, licentiousness, a false and misleading priesthood—these and many more imperfections beset the ancient nation, as they have crept into all societies. But the prophets—the few—threatened, cajoled, demanded; and thus succeeded in keeping alive the spark of Israel's faith.

We repeat in our prayers the belief that because of our sins we were led into captivity. Israel became as the other peoples; hence suffered the fate of all who strive with the sword, forgetful of the word of the Lord. But never in history had an entire nation been destroyed and its remnants driven into captivity—only to come miraculously to life again. Yet was this a miracle? The *remnant* of Israel did not forget Isaiah and Jeremiah; it did not reject the teachings of Ezekiel and those who came after him; it returned to rebuild both the land and the spirit of Judaism. Babylon was overcome by the might of arms; Israel lived by the might of the Eternal.

An individual may learn from the mistakes of the past; a nation, however, forgets the lessons of history. Soon the Second Commonwealth also, created in thoughts of the highest idealism, was filled with recreants, enemies of the Torah. The re-



ligion of those who had remained in the land during the exile bore only remote resemblance to Israel's original teachings. Those coming to the Promised Land anew were often misled; their children would follow a bad example as readily as a worthy one. Ezra, Nehemiah, and the prophets had to rally the loyal minority and uproot the disloyal. They employed drastic remedies; for no feeble measure could preserve the ideals of the faithful minority.

The remnant always returns! Even today, when many Jews, behind a mask of loyalty, would annihilate the very essence of Israel's spirit, we know that a saving remnant still sustains the primacy of the Torah. Time is forever cleaning out our ranks. The weak and unworthy will fall. Individual hearts may break. But the heart of Israel does not break. What the Assyrians and Romans could not do; what the ghetto restrictions could not accomplish; what even learned disloyalty has not succeeded in:—no other power in human life will ever achieve.

Therefore the story that will be told in this series is one of eternal hope. Seemingly an account of how groups of Jews have broken away from the faith, it becomes a proof that all these breakings are of no avail. Sects arise, and sects die. False leaders speak in words of gold; the gold is transformed into tinsel. But the main stream of Jewish belief and life goes on; few though the passengers may be that ride its ships, they may be secure in the knowledge that the hand guiding the helm is immortal, immutable, unfailing. It is the hand of God.

## I. ADDED SUGGESTIONS

Additional Bible study is always advisable. The Hertz or Goldstein series on the Pentateuch will prove helpful for further evidences of conflict and its harmfulness. Thus mention may be made of Lot, who seems to have departed the Biblical scene after the destruction of Sodom and Gamorrah; Ishmael, ancestor of the Turks and Arabs; and Esau, founder of the Edomite (and presumed, the later Roman) race.

The beginnings of the Jewish faith in the wilderness should also be studied. It was difficult for a nation accustomed to polytheism and animal worship in Egypt to appreciate the existence of an abstract God. A discussion of the Egyptian religion, and perhaps other ancient faiths, would form an extraordinary contrast to the monotheism and comparative enlightenment of the new doctrines and practices of the Mosaic law.

The period of the kings brings supplementary topics for consideration. There was the marked desire to imitate neighboring nations, who flourished under absolute monarchs and outward pomp and luxury. The division of the kingdom can be traced to Solomon's emulation of foreign potentates, in excessive building, taxation, princely marriages, alien religious observances, and international alliances. These matters are possible of extended discussion. Already, also, we see the rise of the prophetic class, and the occasional defection of the lesser priests.

The national downfall was preceded by much religious laxity and materialism. The results of having a divided kingdom, with two centers of worship and the intrusion of foreign gods and idols, are obvious. Many of the Babylonian exiles succumbed to local influences; and Ezra had his difficulties with those who fraternized with and married into the Samaritans. What each leader and prophet accomplished against this tide might make the substance of a separate discourse.

## II. THE SAMARITANS

The oldest dissenting sect among the Jews was—and is—the Samaritans. We know them as the group discovered in the land of Judea in 537 B.C.E., which caused so much trouble to the Jewish exiles who had returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. For these people professed to be the only true Jews. Some were descended from the lowest class of the people, who had not left Palestine after the conquest; as a whole they were an admixture of many races, and had no real claim to the heritage of Abraham. But through all history, each Jewish sect has pronounced itself the only true upholder of Judaism, in defiance of every evidence and of the mass opinion of the people.

But the Samaritans, being near the source of Jewish tradition, had a stronger justification of their claims than the sects to follow them. They had their writings, and learned leaders. But when their political power was broken, they began to decay intellectually, and to oppose the established Jewish teachings out of mere partisanship. This process started with the return of the exiles from Babylonia.

Now this group, composed of descendants of former soldiers, exiles, and transplanted prisoners from Assyria, had gradually been weaned from idol-worship and human sacrifice by the few true Israelites living among them. Of the Bible they knew only the Books of Moses and Joshua. There had been no development of law among them; and they still observed the ordinances in these volumes too literally to keep step with the awakening legal conscience of Israel. To most of them God was merely the god of Canaan, the protector of the single territory in which they resided. To this god, only

themselves, heirs of the land, could bring sacrifices; and he would reward or punish his Palestinian subjects alone. Despite many evidences of intermarriage, they were certain that the Samaritans were the sole true descendants of Abraham; that only their priests were of the family of Aaron; and that not Zion, but Mount Gerizim, was the holy elevation on which the Temple was destined to stand.

When the repatriated exiles began to rebuild the Temple, the Samaritans requested permission to assist them. The native group felt that they had the greater knowledge of Judaism, and that they should take hold of the project and lead the outlanders on the proper path. But the newcomers, sensing the difficulties that would follow such an arrangement, determined, in council, to refuse that proffer. The Samaritans, touched in their plans and their pride, were furious. They set out to defeat the builders. They incited the populace against them. They wrote angry and incriminatory letters to Persia. And then nature itself came to their aid, and made it possible for them to undermine the project without conscious effort. Intermarriage became rife. Good Jews were falling in love with native women, marrying them, and bringing up children altogether averse to the authentic Jewish tradition. (This may be compared to a Jew today marrying a woman of another faith, and finding that the woman has arranged to train her offspring in her own church. The situation becomes revolting to him as his youngsters grow older. It is certainly not conducive to the perpetuation of Judaism.)

Ezra, the Scribe, supported by Nehemiah, viceroy of Persia, was compelled to pursue a measure so drastic that there are still many who choose to condemn it. It was ordered that these Jews at once send off their alien wives and children, lest foreign influence destroy all that Israel had striven and hoped for through the days of exile. Let us imagine our own reaction,



were the chalutzim of today suddenly to intermarry on a large scale among native Arab women—whose children would grow up ignorant of the Hebrew tongue, and of the religious traditions and teachings of Judaism. All the aspirations of Zionism would at once be frustrated. Centuries of devoted planning and hoping would go for naught. This remote possibility of the present was a real and active problem in the early days of reconstruction.

The relatives of the women thus put aside lost any feeling of friendship they might have developed for the pioneers, whose progress thereafter became ever more thorny. A number of Jews, including even priests and others of high standing, tried to solve the difficulty by joining the native sect. Under the leadership of the Samaritan Sanballat they helped erect a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim, asserting that the original tenth commandment had read, "Thou shalt build a temple on Mt. Gerizim." Their faith was frozen for all the centuries to come—no compromise with Israel, no change in their original doctrines.

The antagonism then created displayed itself not alone in differences of belief and practice. Often the Samaritans employed shady methods to harm the major party in Judaism. Knowing that the widespread populace relied upon beacon-lights on the hilltops to determine the days of the New Moon and the festivals, Samaritan agents illuminated the hills on wrong dates, in order to confuse the calendar. They even polluted the Temple by strewing it with dead men's bones. Pilgrims bearing doves to Jerusalem for sacrifice would arrive to find that mice had been substituted on the way. Charges were broadcast that the image of a man was worshiped in the Holy of Holies.

Thus the conflict raged, with the Jews declaring everything in the land and manners of the Samaritans contaminated, and

sometimes meeting a blow beneath the belt with a similar assault. When Jerusalem fell, in 70 C. E., there was short-lived rejoicing among the Samaritans—shortlived because the conquering Romans (like persecutors of the Jews—German and others—to this very day) refused to make a distinction among the sects and classes in the land. They suffered equally with the rest under the oppressive laws of the conquerors. In the year 130, under Hadrian, their place of worship, in Shechem, and most of their literature were destroyed. This accounts both for the meagreness of their records today and for the fact that thereafter all manner of dissenters and sectaries managed to enter their ranks.

In any event, the movement slowly decayed. Since they would in no particular join with their arch enemies, and since there was much falling away of the newer elements, they kept on declining—except for rare interludes—until today the Samaritans number perhaps 150 souls all told. They have never rebuilt their temple, but still offer the sacrifices described in Leviticus on Mt. Gerizim. Their own high priest lives on the site of the temple with his family; none of the family will descend into the world of men except in the direst emergency. There are no far-flung colonies of Samaritans, such as are to be found everywhere of the people of Israel.

Strangely enough, we can be grateful for the opposition of the Samaritans—but in the same manner one may be thankful to the Hamans and Hitlers of today. There could be no spiritual stagnation in a religious and racial group which was being constantly opposed and derided. Our people found it necessary to understand their defenses, and to build new spiritual bulwarks against the assailant. They studied Holy Writ more intently. They sought the true meanings in all that was some day to be called the Old Testament. Whereas only the Torah had been read on the Sabbath and other days of meet-

ing, spiritual leaders now found it advisable to read portions of the prophets—the Haftorah—and also from the later writings. Lest the people be too readily misled by the observances of the Samaritans, the rites of the Jews were defined and prescribed in absolute clarity.

Thus, much as we abhor the conduct of this obstinate sect in the earlier years of our history, we are compelled to acknowledge that their influence was indirectly of value in the life of Israel. They were not the distant, ignorant type of Jew-baiters, responsible for such monstrous idiocies as the charge of the Protocols. The Samaritans were near enough to Judaism to keep us on our mental toes. In part, they stimulated the finely detailed development of Jewish law and practice in the centuries that followed their first flowering. This does not excuse their irregular conduct and development; but it brings home to us the sad fact that often it is only a persistent and venomous opposition to our faith that brings us to a closer study of it, and a more determined loyalty.

## II. ADDED SUGGESTIONS

The story of the Samaritans is reminiscent of countless individuals and groups who have wished to be considered Jews. There are in this very country associations of renegade Jews calling themselves "Hebrew-Christians", with their own missions and publications. They declare themselves full members of the Hebrew race, except that their new faith is an improvement upon and a "fulfillment" of the old.

It must be stressed that though we welcome converts and strangers, they must adopt Jewish law and belief ere becoming one with us. All the men of Abraham's household were circumcized. Though we are commanded to love our neighbors of all faiths and races, that precept does not imply that we may accept all men as part of our own communion on insufficient grounds.

In former days entire nations were converted to Judaism. The Idumeans, descendants of Edom (Esau), ruled over Judea for a long while, gave us the notorious Herod, but were not recognized as complete Jews for several generations. The history of these people may be looked up in the encyclopedias, listed in the bibliography, as also of similar folk living in the district of Adiabene in Mesopotamia. The King of Adiabene, Izates, accepted Judaism, and many of his subjects did likewise. Izates and his queen were buried in Jerusalem. The most noted nation of converts were the Chazars—fully discussed in Judah Halleivi's *Kuzari*, after Chasdai ibn Shaprut had made them known, in the tenth century, to the rest of the Jewish people.

A stranger who wishes to become a Jew must recognize that he is laying hardships upon himself; that he must observe Jewish laws and yield to Jewish authority; and that at no time has Judaism accepted as brethren those who, in the guise of kinship, create dissension, difference, and rebellion.



### III. HELLENISM

Greece has given much to the world—philosophy, art, drama, literature, science. But when we as Jews speak of Hellenism, which means the teachings and influence of the Greeks, we refer not to their authentic achievements, but to the debased manner of living opposed to the Jewish life of the period following Alexander.

Much harm then and in modern times has come to Judaism through too close association with Hellenism. Our pious ancestors of old fought against the attitude which leads Jews to imitate the ways of their neighbors, even to hiding their origin and giving up their own culture. We still have Jews who praise all that the outer world offers them and who denounce their Jewish heritage—changing their names, their religion, their very appearance, in order to break with the Judaism they despise.

Such an attitude is generally the product of a period of too great freedom. When Jews are permitted to mingle without restriction among their neighbors, when they are able to discover the attractions in non-Jewish modes of conduct, there is always the probability of their deviating permanently into the new paths. What is new or different—young Jews have often declared—is by that very fact to be held more desirable than the customs of their fathers.

Here was a rejuvenated people, again on their own land, largely left to their own devices, permitted to travel, and to carry on commerce of all sorts with surrounding races. While the great nations were engaged in wars of conquest, Israel was growing and spreading. Communities were being formed in many lands; synagogues were being built; while sacrifices and pilgrimages were still going back to the Holy City. There

was so continuous an infiltration of foreign thought into the Jewish consciousness, that ultimately large masses of the people were inclined toward what we would today call assimilation.

Thus the conflict began. If the Jews had met the Hellenes in the time of their greatest glory, when to the Greeks virtue meant physical, mental and moral excellence, the Jewish ideal of righteousness added to theirs might have produced a civilization such as the world has never seen. But when Hellenism meant a mere cult of beauty, cruelty, and racial intolerance, it was an act of self-destruction for any of our people to seek an alliance therewith. Pure beauty and righteousness are not opposed. We can love God and the arts at the same time. But we cannot also love immorality, vicious class division, slavery, and the exaltation of the human body above the human soul.

Judaism is a democratic faith, where the rich are not favored above the poor. Yet always in the philosophies and practices of the Greeks, there was a wealthy class which was considered rightfully in possession of all sources of pleasure and self-advancement, no matter how lowly were the lot of the majority. The famed luxuries of the baths and gymnasia were accorded only to the upper classes; other men could exercise their muscles by plowing the soil or cutting building stones. This concept grew more and more inhuman, as customs from other nations helped further to deteriorate the Greek doctrines.

One can imagine the alarm of Israel's elders when they beheld the Jewish youth flocking to the Greek gymnasia. In fact, a gymnasium was built by Jews under the very Citadel of David. Here wealthy young men, stripped naked, wrestled and played games exactly like the Greek athletes. All their energies were devoted to physical development, and none to improvement of the mind or the character. It became not unusual for young priests to leave the Temple service in order to witness the games. In the pursuit of art and beauty, there

came a forgetfulness of uprightness and chastity. The old virtues were no longer operative.

Gradually—as has been the age-old custom—men made an effort to justify their departures from tradition. They began to see value in the Epicurean philosophy—that man's true happiness is to be found in the pursuit of the right kind of physical pleasure. They maintained that God was an aloof spirit, without the slightest concern about what was happening on earth. They introduced pagan feasts and celebrations (compare Christmas Jews today). At wild extravaganzas they ate and drank to unimaginable excess. When some objected to the celebration of the feast of Bacchus in Judea, it was clothed in the still familiar guise of a charity affair. Sometimes, after a drinking bout lasting two days—to welcome the new wine crop—the wealthy sots might throw out alms to the poor, to prove that their Jewish hearts were filled with charity. But the poor remained so destitute and crushed that many entered into voluntary slavery. Everything belonged to the Hellenized masters—even the Temple treasury, often robbed to buy advancement for some grasping priest. The Talmud informs us that some of the naked gymnasts actually attempted to conceal the evidences of circumcision.

The Hellenists were, of course, a minority, but the controlling minority. As every evil government creates an opposition, there grew up among the rank and file the party of the Chassidim—not to be confused with the mystical sect that came centuries later. The leaders of these righteous men pleaded for a restoration of Jewish ideals. They rallied the forces of righteousness, continuing to pray and study while others reveled about them—very much like the pious Jews who today fill the study halls of the synagogues in the late afternoon. When young enthusiasts pointed out the greatness of former Greek philosophers and scientists, these men re-

plied that there could be nothing really sound in a philosophy that led to so many perversions.

It may be objected that Hellenism, as it affected later thinkers like Philo, was by no means a poisonous influence. This can be readily answered. As a purely intellectual power it was not so apt to do harm; but as a mode of life, with all its acquired vicious practices, it was able to destroy every vestige of the faith of Abraham and Moses.

We remember the Hellenizers particularly from the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the mad Syrian king who attempted to break down the Jewish religion—a plan frustrated by the Maccabean uprising. It was at this most troublous period that they set up their theatre and gymnasium in the city of Jerusalem. Norman Bentwich declares that the full blame for the mistreatment of the pious Jews should not fall upon the mad ruler—"he was less the promoter than the instrument of the policy which had its roots in the corruption of a part of the Jewish people." A nation whose very priesthood becomes corrupt can expect little respect for its customs on the part of alien tyrants.

For the Hellenizers had been insolent enough to convert both the Sanctuary in Jerusalem and the temple on Mt. Gerizim (Samaritan) into prayer-houses for Zeus, chief god of the Greeks (the Jupiter of Roman mythology). The people were forbidden to observe the Sabbaths and festivals; they were compelled to perform heathen rites and sacrifices, on pain of death for refusal; and an effort was made to identify the God of Israel with various Greek deities.

The Syrians hardly reckoned with the loyal spirit of the Jews, who rose in revolt both against their own brethren who had betrayed them and the king who was carrying out their program. It did not seem possible to the Greek mind (or Syrian—they were of the same stock) that any people would



be willing to die for a God whom no one ever had seen. But the Maccabean victory brought far more than a renewed hope for the oppressed; it actually halted the progress of Greek influence in the civilized world. Through the Maccabees the decadent power lost its ability to do evil.

An extraordinary spiritual awakening followed the Judean revolt. Numerous tribes and groups turned to Judaism in place of the Hellenic creed. Monotheism was enthroned as the only true religion. Jews were so imbued with the excellence of their faith that they set out on missionary tours wherever their influence might reach. After the war of the Maccabees, although many teachers and rabbis might adopt the language or proverbial sayings of the Greeks, there was no immediate danger that the vulgar practices of the Hellenes would again engulf our youth or our leading families. That danger is recurring only now under the rule of certain modern Hellenists, who, adopting the religious customs of the Gentiles, follow after every secular vulgarism, sometimes attempt to conceal their Jewish identity, and exert every effort to drag other Jews into their path.

They, too, will fail, says the spirit of the Maccabees.

### III. ADDED SUGGESTIONS

The struggle between Hellenism and Hebraism has been a continuous one throughout the centuries, and has been reflected in the ideals of countless other peoples. It should be emphasized that the two philosophies did not begin too far apart for a possible agreement. The Greeks laid much emphasis on art and beauty, but their great philosophers did glorify human virtue, as evidenced by Aristotle's Ethics and other writings. Though there is a Jewish prohibition against making images, the stern upright descendants of Abraham were not averse to building a beautiful Temple.

It was the elements of decay in Hellenism that caused the break. Many seized upon the mere idea of beauty, to replace all other considerations of human striving and conduct. No good Jew can approve of a doctrine that he who writes a fine book or sculps a notable statue is to be relieved of the moral obligations of a less gifted citizen. Yet Oscar Wilde made that very claim forty years ago.

Much effort has today been expended in building beautiful temples, especially calculated to impress the non-Jewish world. But when every emphasis is laid upon the beauty of the surroundings and the service, and none upon the individual heart and the individual's participation in prayer, the major purpose of religion is nullified. It should be easy for any loyal Jew to present current examples of beauty running rampant in Israel, while the essence of Judaism is altogether destroyed. At the same time, it can be shown that beauty and religion can exist side by side; and that each will profit from a closer accord with the other.

#### IV. PHARISEES, SADDUCEES, ESSENES

We know that at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple there were three major divisions among the Jews. We might call them all sects, except that the Pharisees comprised the overwhelming portion of the people and were the men after whom modern Judaism is modeled. The real sects were the Sadducees and the Essenes.

Dr. Moses Gaster declares that there was no great religious cleavage between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; the differences were largely social. That is, there was no "fundamental difference between Sadducees and Pharisees in the religious doctrines and principles, as well as in the practices which had grown out of the written law and which constituted the Oral Law." From the time of Ezra to the Maccabees, the priests, descendants of the Aaronic family of Zadok (hence the name Sadducee), were in absolute control of all matters of belief and observance. Ultimately the control became tyrannical, and the popular party broke away from the priestly class. The people called Pharisees—Perushim—were those who separated themselves from the exclusive rule over religious interpretation held by the priests.

It was Josephus who created the impression of a deeper difference than a political one, by declaring that the Sadducees denied immortality, and reward and punishment after death. There were no such divisions of belief on a large scale. The fact was that the Pharisees were more liberal in their interpretation and application of the Law. The Sadducean priests, entrenched in power, wanted to retain for all time the political as well as religious leadership they had taken to themselves; whereas the lay scholars demanded that the religious power be made separate from the temporal, or governmental. Sim-

ilar situations have arisen at later periods in Jewish history; thus, it is only in recent decades that the great mass of Jews in this country have been able to make themselves heard above the loud claims to spokesmanship of a few wealthy and frequently assimilatory co-religionists.

The Torah itself, which had appointed the priestly families judges of the Law and its practice, was used to justify this arrogation of power. The priests were inclined to cling most literally to the letter of the Law which thus protected them. Going beyond the letter might have undermined their authority, which was also enhanced by their complete dominance of the Temple service. But the lay scholars, the separating Pharisees, questioned this narrow interpretation of Jewish teaching. They proclaimed themselves willing to draw additional religious lessons from the Prophets and their successors.

The Maccabean victories reminded the people that, besides the promises to the descendants of Aaron, there had been another covenant established for the family of David. The Davidic line was to be the ruling and defensive power of Israel. For this reason the Pharisees brought Hillel, himself of the House of David, from Babylon to Palestine, there to become the educational and political leader of the mass of the people. The priests were not at first greatly troubled; since they still controlled the Temple and religious observance. They were still the intermediaries between man and God. What the populace believed concerning the other world did not concern them; in any case, immediate atonement for sin was in their hands, in their Temple. When most of the Jews developed a belief in immortality and resurrection, the Sadducees in all probability did not deny these doctrines, but simply declared that they could not be proven directly by the given Law.

But granting that in religious matters there were no fundamental differences between the two groups, the tendency of a



wealthy, aristocratic, self-perpetuating class proved the same then as it has all through Jewish history. For many of these priests, children of Aaron, became actual apostates during the Hellenizing period. They had neither the desire nor the spiritual strength to fight the intrusion of Greek modes of life and worship, even permitting Greek religious practices in the Temple. What is more, they forgot the rule of Aaronic descent, and began appointing priests from other families. And these newly made ministers also kept themselves in seclusion, far from the defiling influence of the common people.

But the common folk, having imported Hillel and his colleagues for that purpose, began to employ their own forms of Biblical interpretation. The Sadducees were fast losing their legal powers and privileges. They still insisted that all leadership, including that of the coming Messiah, must be vested in their own tribe of Levi; whereas the Pharisaic class continued to maintain its allegiance to the House of David. The result was frequent uprisings and bloodshed; the majority did not want a single person—even a Levite—as both priest and king.

Herod, being an alien, an Idumean, was opposed by the Pharisees, whom he persecuted. It is said, also, that Jesus was opposed by the Sadducees for no other reason than that he had been proclaimed a descendant of the House of David.

When the Temple was destroyed, the political party called the Sadducees, whose every right and custom were bound up with the House of Worship, promptly disappeared from the scene. Hillel and his descendants for many centuries became the major interpreters of the Law; and their judgments are still binding upon loyal Jews. The democratic and liberal party was the permanent one—though the word "liberal" is often misused by Jews, not as meaning a freer interpretation within the Law, but as a deviation into strange beliefs and practices.

We recall the Essenes today because it was from the ranks of this over-pious sect that most of the early Christians seem to have sprung. It is unquestionably true that an excess of piety, leading to too much mysticism and separation, may be as harmful to Judaism as any of the other factors which we deplore. The Essenes forgot that Judaism is essentially a religion of life, based upon the facts and needs of earthly existence, and they carried Pharisaism to a disastrous extreme—in this case to the establishment of an entirely new religion.

They were separatists with a vengeance. They lived in colonies of their own—so did the Christians later. Among other customs, they went through a multiplicity of rites for the admission of members; they opposed marriage (note the first Christian attitude toward matrimony); property was communally owned; their meals were like sacraments, that are to this day part of Church ritual; they wore a special garb, and were much concerned with ritual bathing; faith healing was common; and they had a growing hierarchy of angels and saints.

Another group of extreme Pharisee-Essenes went further in their interpretation of the future and the Messiah. That figure became more and more a being from Heaven rather than an inspired human. His was to be a loftier existence, ordained to judge sin and to bring salvation to the world. This sect gave rise to John the Baptist, who, with the help of Essene ideas, prepared the way for Christianity.

Little by little the founders of the new faith steered their course away from the customary trend of Jewish life. They transformed a religion which could keep its feet on earth even while its head was in the spiritual clouds, into one full of strange notions—many of them pagan—concerning the begotten son of God, resurrection, virgin birth, vicarious atonement, and the many other notions which Jews have been murdered throughout the ages for refusing to accept.

Through all these centuries, let it be understood that only the Pharisees have kept Judaism alive. The aristocratic tyrants called Sadducees died as soon as the apparent source of their power was removed. Their wealthy counterparts today, claiming the right to be spokesmen for Israel, are disappearing in the second and third generation through intermarriage and apostasy. Interpretations of Jewish Law not actually based upon the Law have always proved fatal to their upholders. On the other hand, any effort to take Judaism off the earth, and to forget its practical purpose as a "way of life"; any tendency to make it monastic and celibate and too pure for human understanding—will drive Jews into alien and mythological beliefs, and defeat its declared purpose.

Neither a caste that is too lofty in its human relationships, nor a class that lives altogether away from men, can ever succeed in Jewish life. Only Pharisaism has in it the elements of permanence.

## IV. ADDED SUGGESTIONS

It has been made clear that Jews who become either undemocratic or too other-worldly are of little value to their people.

One may trace the careers of self-glorifying, "aristocratic" families in Jewish history, and show how later generations have inter-married and forsaken the synagogue. The tendency to look down upon Jews of a differing European origin—often indulged in by American Jews—results in a sneering attitude toward everything Jewish. Self-constituted princes and arbiters in Israel have done us much harm—especially when they have allied themselves with strange, un-Jewish doctrines. All Jews are brethren; each is a pledge for the others. Every Jew has a share not merely in the world to come, but in this world as well. The Sadducean attitude, however manifested, is directly opposed to fundamental Jewish teachings.

At the same time, observant Jews can make of Judaism a severe, unpleasant faith by setting themselves against all the evidences of the outer world and trying to live in religious seclusion. It is not required of us to become like the Essenes and imagine that God opposes joy and laughter. It is not necessary to live like early Christian and Puritanical sects of today, who consider the other world the only one worthy of contemplation. Children whose parents force them to lead joyless lives often break violently away from Judaism; while others, who merely drift away, may yet be reclaimed. There are Jews who imagine that the limitations of their youth form the authentic pattern of Jewish life; these men may utter statements against such common pastimes as playing baseball, on the ground that "it is not orthodox." We must make an effort to prove that orthodoxy is not so difficult a manner of living as it has often been depicted.



## V. PHARISEES

Because of many slighting references in the New Testament, the world at large has learned to use the word Pharisee as a term of reproach. Hence, dictionaries define Pharisaism as "observing the form but neglecting the spirit of religion; self-righteous; hypocritical." And Henry Ward Beecher, in company with most Christian preachers, who have made not the remotest effort to sift the facts, could say, "A Pharisee is one who worships instruments. Whoever believes that churches, or books, or institutions, or customs, are more valuable than men is a Pharisee."

Such a statement is on every ground false. It is in line with the declaration that the New Testament was a necessary improvement on the lowly Old; and that the requirement that one love one's neighbor as one's self is not met with until the founding of Christianity. Enlightened Gentile theologians of today, however, such as Herford and Moore, have definitely denied this long fostered Christian error, and have written brilliant and learned volumes to correct the common misconception. The more these men study Judaism, from all sources, the better they understand our faith—many Jewish preachers, who deliver Christmas and Easter sermons, will do well to understand that fact.

There always have been men who cloak their misdoings in the mantle of piety. There are sanctimonious gentlemen of little worth in synagogues and churches today. But no ideal can be denounced because of those who hypocritically misuse it. Neither is any young Jew today justified in giving up the observances of his faith because some gentleman who attends synagogue every Sabbath happens to indulge in crookedness on other days. The individual is at fault, not Judaism as such.

The Pharisees were never sticklers for empty forms. Unlike their chief opponents in Israel, they refused to bend to the bare letter of the law; and they were able, without doing violence to the text or to any Jewish doctrine, to interpret Torah teachings in a manner compatible with the times. They therefore combined the values of the past with the requirements of the present; progress, so-called, did not represent a breaking with what came before. They revived old forms of interpretation which had almost been forgotten. In truth, the rules whereby the Talmud derived laws from the Pentateuch were largely developed by this class, under the leadership of Hillel and his successors. In their struggle with the Sadducees, the Pharisees prevented Judaism from becoming the frozen possession of a limited and haughty group.

Though sometimes the effort to discover the later enactments of the Oral Law and the Scribes in the Torah might seem forced, the real effect of Pharisaic method was to keep the Bible a living book, capable of inspiring every generation anew. The Pharisees, although recognizing the hand of God in human affairs, never failed to insist that man was free to do good or evil, and was responsible for all his deeds. They demanded that all Jews, no matter what the circumstances of their lives, maintain themselves as members of a Heavenly Kingdom, some day to be realized on earth. Thus, despite all the hardships of Jewish life then and thereafter, the pious Jew was still impelled to conduct himself righteously, and regularly to praise the name of the Lord in the Kaddish prayer.

We have known the lot of our fathers and mothers in lands of bitter persecution. We have read of the ghettos, medieval and modern, in which large populations were impounded under conditions of extreme discomfort. The story of pogroms and the Crusades is too well known to recount in its fulness. Yet, remarkably enough, no hardship, no disaster, no peril, was

ever able to destroy Israel's hopefulness. This ability to rise above the dark days of persecution was brought into being by the Pharisees. Not alone the judgments of law which we employ today, but the very attitudes of the Jewish soul, can be traced to the separatists of the Greek-Roman period.

Always they taught of a God forever near to those who call upon Him. Even His punishments were interpreted as a cleansing for sin, to be followed by evidences of divine love. Sainly teachers, keeping close to the common man, transmitted these ideals to those who studied and worshiped in the synagogues. There was comfort in the ideal of making a sinning and troublesome world a bit of Heaven, and in awaiting a blessed reward from the Father. The Pharisaic fore-runners of the modern rabbi were not self-seekers; they were not bent on self-advancement at the expense of ideals; the sole purpose of teachers and schools was to add to the happiness and virtue of all within their influence. The house of prayer and its precepts, once rooted to the soil alone, grew far stronger roots in the heart of Israel. From these beginnings arose the entire synagogue system, responsible for Jewish continuance in foreign lands. Ideals existing in human minds have more permanence than those bound up with a single structure of worship.

Therefore did Sadducaism die with the Temple; while Pharisaism persisted through exile and massacre and war. Pharisees also were drawn into the many armed conflicts of the day; but their ideals did not alter. The fundamentals remained.

In the light of what the Pharisees taught and practiced during the most troubled times of our national history, it is the height of untruth and unfairness to ascribe to them the faults so readily believed by a non-Jewish world. Had they been a mere conglomeration of hypocrites, their name would

long ago have been blotted out. Instead, Pharisaism is still the guide to Jewish life.

Noteworthy is the method devised by the Pharisees for the determination of individual laws. They were opposed to personal judgments handed down by a single man. The entire matter would be thrashed out, in the manner employed by the Schools of Hillel and Shammai. After unlimited debate the decision would be fixed by the united voice of the wise and pious—or by a sufficient majority of teachers worthy of veneration. Their purpose was not merely to expound a text, but to find a practical standard for the actual needs of the moment. There was no rigid, barren formalism. The "tree of life" idea is Pharisaic. Or we may proceed two thousand years ahead and call it rabbinic—for rabbinism is the continuation of Pharisaism.

When a Pharisee was faced with a question of duty under certain conditions, "he would feel," says Herford, "that the answer depended not only on the fact that he was personally and directly accountable to God as an isolated human being in the presence of his Maker, but also on the fact that he was one of a community whose ideals of service he shared and whom he could either help or hinder in pursuing those ideals." That social attitude has been evident in all subsequent Jewish teachings.

Furthermore, God being righteous, He cannot be indifferent to the distinction between right and wrong. To love God means to live justly. Rewards for righteous living are not to be in the nature of a present given to a well-behaved child; but are to consist in a better and improving state for all humanity. In keeping with the teachings of the prophets, the Law is to be developed on ethical as above ceremonial lines. The main purpose of the ceremonies is to impel the individual to a more upright existence.



This is Pharisaism, and this is Judaism. The full ethical aims of the Pentateuch and the Prophets were illumined by Pharisaic teachings. The Torah was never made static, but a progressive divine revelation. The Halachah was not permitted to become a burden, requiring certain regular hardships of observance; it was the freely chosen activity of the Jew to help in keeping alive God's moral plan. There was little system in Pharisaic theology; but there was a very clear and closely knit system of Pharisaic conduct.

All this should make evident to the Jew that the religion of the Pharisees, while concerning itself with every ritual provision of the Torah, never limited itself to rites alone, but was devised to bring hope, blessing, and righteousness into the soul of man. The Pharisees alone preserved Israel; and Israel will continue to live only insofar as the ideals they taught and practiced are maintained in the lives of present-day Jews.

## V. ADDED SUGGESTIONS

The fact to be stressed in regard to Pharisaism, the true form of Judaism, is that it is a flexible thing, as modern as any of its asserted substitutes. Despite the denunciations of its opponents, traditional Judaism is capable of adapting itself to changing times; but it draws the line at an adaptation which destroys the very faith it pretends to be saving.

The best example of the judgments of the Pharisees is that of the first Hillel, who bulks so large in the story of the Jewish majority. His special decrees, enacted for "the amelioration of the world", are needed departures from the hard and fast judgments of the Sadducees. The "Prosbul" made it possible to retain property after the year of Jubilee, through a novel contract. Other enactments helped the people to transact business under changing conditions.

When non-Jews ridicule the Pharisees, let them be told that Hillel declared the Golden Rule to be the entire substance of religion; and that good character and love of man were fundamental in his teachings. He stressed physical cleanliness as well. He was humble and restrained. He demanded active loyalty to the community. Love of peace, devotion to study, philanthropy, and reverence for God marked every stage of his career. Hillel is the answer to all who misuse the term Pharisee.

Certainly, the truer worth and power exist in that element of the Jewish people which has maintained itself without fundamental change through every age, clime, and condition of existence.

## VI. KARAITES

The Sadducees were reproached for their too literal interpretation of the sacred text. But the sect of the Karaites, which arose in the eighth century, carried its restrictive interpretation of Jewish lore to an unusual extreme. For Anan ben David, who founded the movement in Babylonia, repudiated utterly the authority of the Talmud, and in fact of every Jewish book after the Pentateuch. Rabbinism was rejected; only the Bible was binding. Thus, every derivation from Mosaic law, every amelioration of conditions created by the law, every application to new conditions, was beyond the consideration and practice of Anan's followers. Such a deadening reversion to past legalisms could be of but doubtful service to Judaism; as it happened, only a small proportion of the people ever turned to it.

Today too men sometimes rise to demand a reversion to the Torah unadorned. Such Jews, however, seem to oppose not only Talmudism, but the fundamentals of Biblical law itself. Thus, one will declare that the entire structure of the dietary laws rests on insufficient basis in the Pentateuch; but he will not hesitate, nevertheless, to violate the specific prohibition against eating pork. He may renounce the Talmudic roster of thirty-nine forms of labor prohibited on the Sabbath; and yet without a qualm conduct his customary activities on the sacred day. Most modern protestants against the Oral Law are essentially insincere; whereas the Karaites carried their ideas to their honest and sometimes bitter conclusions.

The name Karaites, applied to the supporters of Anan ben David, is derived from the root "kara" (to read), indicating "mikra", or the scriptural text. These sectaries, following the lead of similar movements in Islam of that day, were encour-

aged to study the words of their sacred writings with new industry; and to reach their religious judgments without recourse to the accumulated mass of commentation.

Like all militant minorities, the Karaites lumped their opponents—practically all Israel—into one class, the Rabbanites. Like "bourgeois" in the mouth of a radical today, it became a bitterly abusive epithet. And they carried the minority tradition further by exerting themselves in every manner possible to gain converts—lectures, open letters, disputations, and "boring-from-within." Their many polemics were replied to in kind by the Rabbanites, who denounced the sect as a heresy. Saadiah Gaon (892-942) was the most able of the defending forces. He and his colleagues felt that a return to "first principles" was not a return at all, but a regression. All law is a slowly developing thing, based on certain fundamental axioms or assumptions; and what is good doctrine today may be of no use tomorrow. The Rabbanites also made it clear that in every decision of the sages, no detriment had been done to the actual meaning of the Biblical texts.

The Karaites were not satisfied with refusing to follow derived or modified later laws. They also abolished the prayers recited for centuries in the synagogues, substituting selections from the Bible. They allowed every student unrestricted liberty of judgment in interpreting scriptural texts. Unlike the methods of the great academies of the past, the man and not the majority was to be the judge.

Still, their scholars agreed on most fundamentals. One of these was, as might be expected, the forbidding of any intercourse or intermarriage with the wicked Rabbanites. In Jerusalem, another branch of the Karaites, observing the ascetic and purifying rules of the Pentateuch, refused to have intercourse not only with Rabbanites, but with all the rest of humanity. Their separatism became the most extreme in the history of Judaism.



In company with the Samaritans, the Karaites had an indirect influence in promoting Jewish studies. For the Rabbanites, assailed by the steady stream of criticism from their learned opponents, found it necessary to study the Bible with ever greater application. They produced works on law, on grammar, on the traditional reading of the Scriptures, and many Biblical commentaries. Thus, Karaism too is responsible for much valuable literature, though its direct effect on Judaism has been of no permanent worth.

For a while the Karaite communities spread with fair rapidity. They were prominent in Constantinople in the eleventh century, and in later centuries lived without conflict among their Rabbanite brethren. But as a result of Rabbanite professions to King Alfonso all Karaites were expelled from Spanish cities about 1150. Other large groups settled in Lithuania, Crimea, and Poland. It was in Crimea that they attained their greatest development; of the 12,000 Karaites still on earth, almost 10,000 reside in that land.

At one time Karaites and Rabbanites were accorded similar rights and privileges by the Polish and Turkish governments. When the Russians conquered Crimea, however, in 1783, the Karaites declared themselves a sect entirely apart from the Jews; they were thereupon exempted from the poll-tax and other special imposts provided for the children of Israel. Soon thereafter they were accorded the same treatment given to Christians, and their relationship to Israel became highly strained.

The final and most interesting judgment concerning the Russian Karaite community came in 1840, when the government was in some manner convinced that the Karaites were the descendants of the Ten Tribes. (Similar conjectures have been offered concerning every unknown or mysterious race on earth.) Also, since the lost tribes were presumed to have

settled in the Crimean territory seven centuries before the common era, it was hardly possible that they had had a hand in the crucifixion of Jesus. Hence their descendants were not to be treated with the severity due the progeny of the several million Jews who had presumably assisted in putting the Christian founder to death. The Karaites were granted every possible favor. They were exempted from all Jewish disabilities. They were not forced into military service. They could settle where they wished and trade without restriction. For many years, until the Kerensky revolution, they were designated "Russian Karaites of the Old Testament Faith", so that none might belittle them with the name "Jew."

Saadia Gaon's work "In Refutation of Anan", no copy of which today exists, first exposed Anan's inconsistencies, and traced his formation of a new sect to a personal slight he had received from a Talmudist. The book defended the place of tradition in all religious history, and showed how absurd would be the extension of the Karaite method of reasoning. Saadia also translated the Bible into Arabic, to make it more accessible to the ordinary reader; and added notes to prove that there was no contradiction between the words of the Bible and the interpretations in the Talmud. He also riddled the Karaite misconception of the Scriptural calendar. The only replies of the Karaite leaders were abuse and invective. Their case remained weak before the logical and factual onslaughts of the brilliant Rabbanite masters.

To this day the sect offers special prayers for its founder. But there is no evidence that Anan had any profundity or philosophical knowledge. Because the Bible declares that the life of living creatures is in their blood, he pronounced the blood the seat of the soul. He was not consistent even in his opposition to Talmudic laws—for he retained a number of religious laws which could in no manner be directly traced

to any Biblical passage. He looked upon Jesus and Mohammed as holy men, to be recognized as prophets. He was surely not in accord with Biblical tradition or with common sense and decency when he prohibited the administration of medicine on the Sabbath, even to dangerously ill patients. The Sabbath and all religious observances were made gloomy beyond endurance. His entire system was an artificial creation, with no support in the past, and with no consideration for revered customs or popular sentiment.

It is seen once more, from a study of Karaism, that breaking with Israel's past ultimately means breaking with Israel itself. The sectaries become more rigorous enemies of the people than those without the fold. The Karaites are no longer called Jews; but 18,000,000 descendants of the Rabbanites are still proud to be called by that name.

## VI. ADDED SUGGESTIONS

The peculiarity of Karaite doctrine is demonstrated in all later rebellious movements. Though its upholders professed to be returning to fundamentals, they found it impossible to avoid keeping some later ideas and practices. Karaism was bent on following the Bible only, and excluding rabbinic laws; but it did in fact adopt a large measure of rabbinical traditions, and borrowed from other Jewish and Islamic sects. Every group of Jewish dissenters has at some time discovered that derived customs may also serve useful purposes in Judaism.

There have been parties determined to overthrow everything sanctified by the rabbis and sages—Sabbath observance, dietary laws, Palestine, the Hebrew tongue. Then suddenly the Sabbath is made holy again; there is a decided swing to candle-lighting. Deriders of the dietary provisions decide that at any rate they should not eat pork in the presence of Gentiles. Zionism becomes fashionable. Courses in Hebrew are given in Sunday Schools. Boys are again made "Bar Mitzvah."

From the Karaites also we learn that a rebel movement, not rooted in the actual historic development of Judaism, tends to break up and travel in contrary directions. Thus while one extremist party proclaimed that the Sabbath and holidays were mere memorials, no longer to be observed in the exile, the rigoristic Karaites were forbidding their followers even to leave the house on the Sabbath, to carry anything from one room to another, to wash the face, wear anything but a shirt, or make their beds on that day. Tradition alone sanctifies and unifies.



## VII. CHASSIDIM

The youngest of the great sects based upon traditional Judaism is that of the Chassidim. We find these fervid groups in every part of the world; and our knowledge of them is generally limited to their singing and dancing during prayer. We read the legends clustering about the lives of their leaders—a remarkable conglomeration of religious fairy tales. Thus we know them as men who put extreme emotion in their religious service, with a strong mystical awareness of God's nearness; as believers in the divine quality of their rabbis and Zaddikim, evidenced by the miracles they have performed; and as exalters of the common man, even though he be ignorant, who can properly appreciate the greatness and goodness of the Lord.

There have always been Jews of mystical leanings. The Kabbalah, the difficult tomes which try to trace through various spheres of glory the connection between Heaven and earth, between God and man—by the use of words and quotations instead of material proof—found its origin in the first chapters of Genesis and Ezekiel. From Babylon and Persia the Jews adopted ideas of heaven and hell, and of the upper and lower worlds. The "hidden" works now called the Apocrypha were filled with ideas of "other worlds" and "latter days." There was the ascetic sect of the Essenes, from whom came many of the early Christians. There was the Alexandrian Philo, who was always searching out the hidden meanings in the words of the Torah. During the gaonic period appeared the *Sefer Yetzirah*, or Book of Creation, which ascribed extraordinary powers to the very letters of the Hebrew alphabet. After this exceedingly popular work, there came into being the *Sefer Ha-Zohar*, Book of Splendor, which is

the Bible of Kabbalism even today. Despite the miraculous tale of its origin, ascribed to Simeon ben Johai in pre-Talmudic times, it was probably the work of Moses de Leon, a Spanish rabbi of the thirteenth century.

The Zohar professes to find the true inner meanings of the words of the Torah. It tells much about the soul, and about the travels, trials, and transmigrations of human souls. It is filled with stories, legends, ethical teachings, apt quotations. Particularly after the expulsion from Spain, did the hopeless, weary Jews of Europe seek glory and light in this refuge for the Jewish spirit. It made mystic dreams and mystic searchings possible in a world outwardly dark and cruel.

Thus the Kabbalah kept hope alive in the Jewish heart. The "Ari", Rabbi Isaac Luria, born in Jerusalem in 1534, put some order in the many fantastic concepts of the time; but he himself is responsible for the idea of rebirth or reincarnation, called *gilgul*, employed in such dramas as *The Dybbuk*. There were false Messiahs, who might bring disrepute to Kabbalistic notions; but the people in general were ready to accept any idea that could gladden their suffering hearts. Saints and heroes arose, called Baale Shem, or Masters of the Name, who were a combination of witch doctors and expellers of evil spirits. Magic became respectable.

The founder of the modern sect of Chassidism was born into just such an environment, in Podolia, Poland, about the year 1700. This was Israel Baal Shem Tov, who, though he was neither scholar, writer, nor orator, was able to sweep thousands of poverty stricken, almost despairing Jews into his movement. Although the successor of a long history of mysticism, his personal sect or party attained a character of its own quite apart from the mystic teachings of the past.

The unlettered Jew found a place for himself in the movement. It was not a religion of doctrines to be debated, but

of a faith to be experienced. The Baal Shem Tov taught that God required of man neither a sanctimonious withdrawal from life, nor great learning; if the illiterate believer only repeated his prayers with proper fervor and enthusiasm, he would achieve the favor of Him on high.

God was very near to these enthusiasts. Joy was supreme even in the gloomiest of days. One danced and sang and loved one's brethren. Remarkable legends arose of how the soul of the Besht (Baal Shem Tov) traveled into Heaven, conversed with God and the souls of the departed, brought saving and healing to distressed mortals in distant parts of the world, and became in fact supra-human. The teachers who followed him remained, like himself, loyal to the practices of orthodoxy, so that the Talmudic leaders could not attack them on that score; hence Chassidic propagandists penetrated all the villages of Central Europe in an effort to spread their doctrine. Gradually, out of the adoration accorded these leaders, there arose the conception of the Zaddik, or superman, who was the intermediary between God and His creatures, and who was capable of performing supernatural feats. This exaltation of individual men, still found among members of the sect, has been one of its most obvious weaknesses. The semi-deification of human beings has never been a strong point in Judaism.

There were enough peculiarities in Chassidic practice to bring out the stern opposition of the learned class. In 1772 the Gaon of Wilna issued a letter of excommunication against them. Many of the charges against the Baal Shem Tov and his successors were undoubtedly true. They belittled Talmudic learning—evidently as a sop to the submerged majority; they treated with scorn many rabbinic customs, particularly those of self-affliction, such as fasting; they opened new synagogues, with the ritual of Ari, and thus helped to disintegrate the

Jewish community. And they undoubtedly developed and kept alive an entire new series of superstitious beliefs.

Yet we must always recognize the fact that, with all its fanaticism and its reliance on Kabbalistic formulæ, Chassidism did serve a useful purpose in bringing joy and hope into the hearts of downtrodden and suffering men. The poor, the simple, the ignorant, felt themselves at one with Israel. From Chassidism came the revival of melody and the dance in the Jewish religion.

The movement had never sought to break up the house of Israel. But it was opposed by other Jews, called Misnagdim, whose reliance on authority, form, and learning clashed with the Chassidic attraction to ecstasy, freedom in religious observance, and holiness as above erudition. Chassidim have no fixed times for worship; their ritual is different. Yet there are some matters in which we now see that they had the correct outlook.

This is especially true in their attitude toward Jewish education. They seek to inculcate piety in the pupil; they demand it of the teacher. Today, when so many Hebrew instructors are merely imparters of knowledge, without belief, loyalty, or enthusiasm, it may be well to recognize this basic desire of the Chassidic parent. "God seeketh the heart."

They favor early marriage. Their synagogue is a home as well as a sanctuary. They resist austerity and sanctimoniousness.

But, when we have catalogued all their virtues, we have but to take account of the lives of our own non-Chassidic fathers and grandfathers, to ascertain that every good Jew of modern times is possessed of similar virtues, though not carried to similar extremes. Democracy, charity, religious melody, lively exuberance at "simchot" and on certain joyous festivals, observance of Talmudic law, an effort to pray with feeling and



understanding, living within the kingdom of one's own heart and mind, the esteem of great men, respect for leaders in religion and learning, care of the child, glorification of the Sabbath—the list might be made exhaustive, but it would be only a recital of the excellences in deed and emotion of every truly good Jew.

It is because Chassidism was debased into a religion of excesses that we today cannot call it the authentic interpreter of the Jewish soul. We cannot belittle learning, even though secular, to a generation that attends schools and universities, and reads newspapers in the vernacular. We cannot honor a "rebbe" to the extent of walking backward before him, and wiping the dust from the paving stones on which he is to tread. If we wish to dance, it is with a little less abandon than enters into the religious gyrations of the Chassid. We sing in unison, and at stated times. We believe in system even in religious observance. We do not worship a book (the Zohar) and speak in mystic phrases of certain mythical spheres through which mankind ascends to God. We are not spiritualists. We decry the use of amulets.

Without adding to this recital of what has been good and what bad in Chassidism, it is sufficient to point out that it is essentially a sect in Israel. Like all Jewish sects, it may ultimately die out, but the main stream of Judaism will continue to flow in its appointed channel—as it has done these thousands of years.

## VII. ADDED SUGGESTIONS

The faults of Chassidism can be used as object lessons for Jews of today. First, we must protest at all times against the use of words to replace unknowable things, which is the method of the Kabbalah. We cannot create systems of heavens and spheres arbitrarily, and then spend our days trying to fit our knowledge into such an imaginary universe. Jews should concern themselves with the practical needs of life and of Judaism, and dream only of ways of increasing knowledge and personal usefulness. Every Jew must learn to speak in a manner intelligible to himself and to others. Our faith was not given to a limited few to understand.

Then we must struggle with every modicum of strength against the superstitions largely fostered by the Chassidim. The use of amulets is assuredly a doubtful practice. The non-observant Jew who puts a mezuzah on the fender of his car to ward off accidents is not alone misguided; he is violating the prime purpose of the mezuzah (and, incidentally, forgetting that the word mezuzah itself means "doorpost"). The Jew who will not move to the thirteenth floor, necessitating a change of numbering by the landlord, is too debased in intelligence to be considered a Jew—though this superstition is largely Christian in origin. There should be no superstition of any kind in Judaism.

On the other hand, we may well emulate the Chassidim in their exalted attitude toward their religion, and in their determination to find joy in life and God no matter what the circumstances of their environment. There is much that is good in their methods.

## VIII. MODERN DEVIATIONS

When we review the various movements that have befuddled the Jewish outlook and broken up Jewish unity, we find that certain characteristics mark every one of them. First, the declaration that only by following the particular system advocated by each partisan will Judaism be saved. Second, that each movement is in direct line with the development and modernization of Jewish thought. Third, that the resistant majority is backward, unprogressive, practically treacherous to Judaism. Self-assurance, learned rationalization, and abuse are thus the chief weapons of the heterodox.

But a closer investigation of the lives of most Jewish sectaries reveals an illuminating fact. They do not ordinarily reach their conclusions first, following long deliberation; but, having drifted into non-belief or non-observance, or having found them more conducive to their success in life or their personal comfort, they have tried to fit the pattern of their lives into a new Jewish system. Plainly, a Jew first desecrates the Sabbath before he discovers reasons for ignoring it or substituting the observance of Sunday. The eater of trephah food ultimately comes to ridicule the principle of Kashruth. The rabbi who finds it difficult to advance in a traditional congregation and thereupon accepts a more "liberal" post, suddenly discovers that the organ was played in the old Temple, and that we may therefore today disregard the rabbinic prohibition against instrumental music on the Sabbath. (The fact that the organ was a cathedral instrument devised in the middle ages does not deter him from this type of defense.) There is a feeling of guilt for having broken with parents and tradition; and that feeling is salved by a new system of Judaism, in complete accord with the purposes and actions of the culprit.

Now, some men, of lesser learning or self-importance, will merely make excuses for *themselves*. But a man of note, in some responsible teaching or communal position, must justify himself before a multitude. So he composes great tomes, in which he carries through the methods first mentioned: his way will save Judaism; he is not deviating from the plain road of Jewish progress; and those who oppose him are intellectually contemptible. The results of all these efforts are proven by time to be destructive to Judaism:—a census of the children of such new leaders, past or present, reveals that a highly disproportionate ratio have drifted altogether from the fold of their fathers.

Moses Mendelssohn, responsible for the spread of the movement called the Haskalah, was, unlike others of his group, essentially loyal to Judaism; but his descendants were assimilated. The movement was Germanic, as was Reform later. Seeking to spread "Enlightenment" by translating the sacred books into the vernacular, extending secular knowledge, improving Jewish education, and leading the Jews out of what was called an intellectual ghetto—all worthy objects in themselves—the maskilim began to add to these aims their own predilections to Germanization and Russification, and they engaged in bitter invective against the "old-fashioned" Jew. Religious nihilism developed. The synagogue was assailed in the holy tongue itself! Even the Hebrew language was employed, not to further the aims of the faith partially based upon its sacred character, but to turn Jewish thought and literature into secular and non-Jewish channels.

When, finally, these enlighteners who did not enlighten were able to see the destructive results of their propaganda (that is, those who had not been altogether assimilated), they turned their energies to a new movement. That movement was as old as Judaism itself; it was reflected in the tears and



hopes and prayers of centuries of Jews; it had been the inspiration of Judah Halleve and the timeless aspiration of an entire nation. Zionism, revived as a national force by Theodor Herzl, had been woven into the very heart fibers of Jewry. And suddenly these men, who had read themselves out of Judaism, returned to the fold as Zionists. This was the be-all and the end-all of Jewish life; nothing else mattered. One might be guilty of every crime against the teachings of Torah and Talmud, or have a Gentile wife and Gentile children:—but love of Zion would be sufficient to stamp one a complete Jew. The part was made as important as the whole—even more important.

Now we are treated to the spectacle of Jewish leaders, rabbis included, ignoring every law and lesson of Israel's past, excusing every treacherous act, condoning atheism and worse, merely on the ground of allegiance to the Zionist ideal. Zionism should be supported by every Jew; it is part of our historical life-blood; but it must not be made the excuse for the backslidings of every disloyal Israelite. Our prayers, our religion, kept the ideal alive; without a Godly character, it cannot survive.

But at the worst, the secularist Zionist leaders did accomplish great good in Israel. Though everyday nationalism is only a fraction of true Judaism, numbers of near-apostates did return to the service of Israel under the spur of the Zionist movement. They too shared in the agitation which has brought us the Balfour Declaration, the revival of the Hebrew tongue, and many benefits which it will be difficult to destroy despite continuing assimilatory tendencies. However, can we, with all charity to our brethren, defend a movement that abolished Zionism and Palestine, the Sabbath, the Hebrew tongue, the Talmudic law, and most of the Pentateuch; which modeled its services after Christian churches, leaving the utterance of prayer

to a group of individuals, most of them Christians; and which did all this and more in the name of helping and modernizing the faith? It should not be necessary to expatiate on the Reform movement now; recent attempts to come into Zionism, to return to certain Sabbath customs, and to unite on general grounds with representatives of the formerly despised conservative groups, are an indication that some of its early errors have been recognized. One official recently declared: "Unless Reform turns sharply to the right, it is doomed!"

As an offshoot of neo-Orthodoxy and Reform we have also a so-called Conservative group. This term is acknowledged even by many of its upholders to have no set meaning. It seems to have replaced the somewhat objectionable term "semi-Reform" employed two or three decades ago. Unfortunately, rabbis calling themselves by this name have accepted congregations from one extreme to the other; one can be as pious as a Chassid or as radical as any extreme Reformer, and still call one's self conservative. There are cases of the same "Conservative" rabbi applying for an ultra-Orthodox position, catering to European, Yiddish-speaking Jews, and for an extremist Reform position wherein the Sabbath had been replaced by Sunday, at the same time in the same street of the same city. Reform graduates apply to a Conservative group for positions, on the ground that "We are not Reform; we are really Conservative." The word means all things to all men, and permits spiritual leaders to jump from position to position without qualms, and congregants who have given up most of their orthodoxy to salve their consciences with a partial adherence to tradition.

Out of Conservatism there have developed other features. One movement has become the cult of a single man, who has gathered about him an intellectually motley group of partisans, who may be atheists, secularists, communists, or anything else

under the sun, and still fit into his ideology. It is not to be assumed that his success comes from the scholarship and leadership that he undoubtedly possesses. His vague philosophizing and condonation of breaches in Jewish law have been seized upon by many non-conformists as justification of their own backslidings. Plainly, a sincere if misguided desire to be helpful to Judaism has resulted in the de-Judaizing of many disciples, and the self-exculpation of other leaders who would likewise be suffering from a feeling of guilt.

There are other movements today, some slightly muddled, others obvious Jewish commercializations of such religions as Christian Science. But whereas previously Jews who felt themselves without any allegiance to their ancestral faith promptly gave up all or turned to some Christian sect, now the inclination is to make a religion of some disloyal, disruptive, and dictatorial political movement. We want neither renegades nor revolutionaries in the Jewish ranks; the world is still ready to denounce all Jews for the faults of a few. As the Judaism of tradition proved a bulwark against decadent and non-Jewish sectarianism in past centuries, so now it has the added function of keeping young Jews out of economic and political parties which will spell ruin to our entire heritage and add more fuel to the never extinguished hatred of our enemies.

## VIII. ADDED SUGGESTIONS

As we come to the end of this series of Jewish aberrations, we can take stock of them all and see that most of them, no matter how far apart in time, have marked resemblances. There have always been self-seeking leaders, aristocrats who despised the rest of their brethren, pseudo-philosophers, makers of systems that would excuse their own forms of conduct, and ordinary trouble-makers, like Korach. And there have always been masses of Jews prepared to be misguided.

But we must acknowledge that, just as Hitlerism has brought recreant Jews back to an understanding of and loyalty to their ancestral teachings, so the opposition from within has required us to study more closely and to defend tradition more capably. The sects have kept us mentally alert; have given our prophetic preachers something to fulminate against; and have made apparent to the Jew in peaceful circumstances the dangers that may yet beset him. A fighting organism is a living organism.

This is, however, a lefthanded form of praise for sectaries. In history they have achieved no goal. They have been dangerous to their fellow-Jews, even to the extent of providing informers to the ruling powers. They have wilfully divided Jew against Jew.

We may end with the dictum that the Jew must stick to his last. The proper study of mankind is man; the proper interest of the Jew is Judaism. When we wander afield, we generally fall into a ready pit and are seen no more as Jews.







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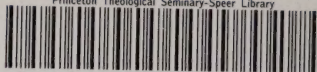
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